



# Memorandum

**TO:** PARKS AND RECREATION  
COMMISSION

**FROM:** Yu-Wen Huang

**SUBJECT:** IRIS CHANG PARK MASTER PLAN

**DATE:** March 21, 2016

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Approved

Date

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

Review and accept the draft Master Plan for Iris Chang Park and authorize the Chair for the Parks and Recreation Commission to submit a letter advising the City Council to approve the draft Master Plan.

## **BACKGROUND**

Iris Chang Park will be a new neighborhood park in north San José. The site was part of the former Cadence Design Systems campus that is being redeveloped into multi-family residential housing. The 2.6 acre site was acquired by the City as part of the dedication process through the Parkland Dedication Ordinance (PDO) for the planned development to fulfill its PDO obligation. In addition to the dedication of 2.6 undeveloped acres, the residential development paid park in lieu fees for master planning and park development reserves. Previously referred to as Epic Park or Essex Park, it was renamed Iris Chang Park through the City's naming process for City-owned land and facilities in November 2014.

Iris Chang was one of America's leading young historians. As a journalist and writer, Iris Chang was known for her comprehensive research and writing historical books documenting the experiences of Asians and Chinese Americans. She established herself as a valued source of information about Asia, human rights, and Asian American history. Her work reflected a deep concern about issues of human rights and discrimination; equally important was her belief that each of us as individuals can make a difference.

Public art will be a key element of Iris Chang Park. In November 2015, the Office of Cultural Affairs (OCA) issued a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) seeking an artist to create artwork for Iris Chang Park. The opportunity for public art includes collaboration with the landscape architects for integrated site design, material selection, landscape and other creative enhancements as well as the development of stand-alone sculptures. While not specifically a

“memorial,” the memory of Iris Chang shall inspire the design. Richard Deutsch was the artist selected to create the public art elements in the park. The artist has been working collaboratively with PlaceWorks, the design consultant. Together they have created an integrated design approach which is well supported by the community. We have held three community meetings through the master planning process. The integrated design approach was approved by the Public Art Committee on February 16, 2016.

## **ANALYSIS**

The proposed design for the park was developed with the commissioned public artist and recommendations of community members through a series of community meetings. One of the goals for the project is to create a unique park that is memorable for the visitors and park users. The Iris Chang Park Master Plan is based on the premise that one person or action can make a difference, the Power of One that Iris Chang wrote about. Three community meetings were held over several months to better understand the resident’s requests and needs for the park. We discussed the types of activities and amenities the community desired, as well as the quality of space and experience that residents valued and could be provided in Iris Chang Park. The strongest requests from residents was the need for trees, specialty plantings, lighting, shaded seating, and public art. There was no consensus regarding active recreation, such as tennis, basketball, or skating. When asked to residents to articulate the sought after qualities for Iris Chang Park, the unquestionably clear desire expressed was to create a peaceful oasis, an out of the box experience, a destination, a beautiful, breathtaking and visually engaging space. The proposed amenities for the park include a successive art installation including six sculptures, bike racks, trash receptacles, benches and a drinking fountain with pet bowl. Other than the sculptures, there will be no other structures in the park.

Coyote Creek Trail runs on the levee along the entire eastern edge of the park. Currently, the trail is separated by a 7-foot elevation change and a chain link fence. Public access to the trail is available at Montague Expressway and Tasman Drive with private access from the Crescendo development to the north. Providing trail access via the park would make Coyote Creek Trail easily accessible to the residential communities and offices in the area. Staff has been coordinating with Santa Clara Valley Water District on the design of the trail connection.

PlaceWorks will prepare the Initial Environmental Study for the Master Plan after it is approved by the Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC).

It is recommended that the PRC receive public testimony regarding the proposed final layout for the park and the associated draft Master Plan. The PRC should take formal action by authorizing the Chair to submit a letter of support on behalf of the PRC, advising City Council to approve the draft Master Plan.

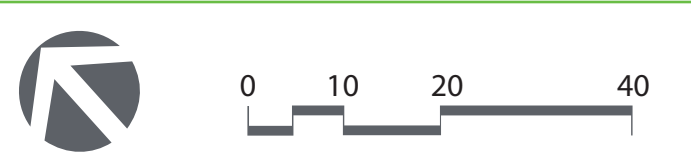
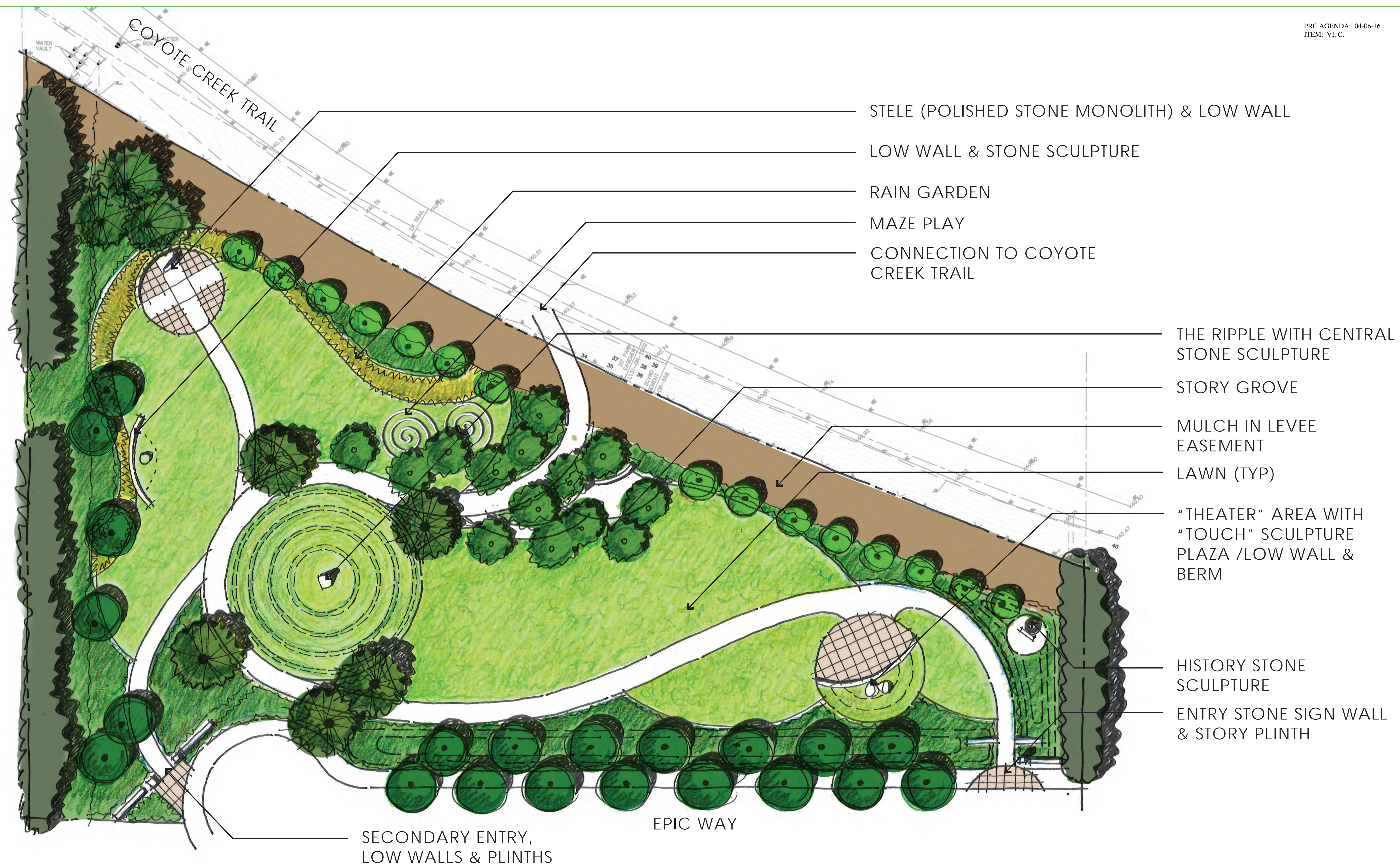
## **PUBLIC OUTREACH**

There were three community meetings held on November 12, 2015, January 13, 2016 and February 9, 2016. Print notifications were mailed to adjacent residents within 1000 feet of the proposed park site. The meeting notice was also posted on the City calendar, the City webpage for Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services Department, and Social Media such as Facebook, Twitter and NextDoor.

/s/  
Yu-Wen Huang  
Project Manager, Parks, Recreation and  
Neighborhood Services Department

For questions, please contact Yu-Wen Huang at (408) 793-5595.

Attachment: Concept Plan  
Draft Master Plan



## IRIS CHANG PARK MASTER PLAN

Iris Chang Park will be a new park in the City of San José. The following is a written summary of the master plan, an illustrative graphic, and supplemental imagery to convey the public art which is a key component of the project.

### A. CONTEXT, SITE DESCRIPTION AND LOCATION

The City of San Jose has secured a 2.61-acre site located in north San José through the Parkland Dedication Ordinance (PDO). Prior to the City's acquisition, the site was part of the Cadence Design Systems campus, with a portion of the 2.61-acre site located under a building, and the remaining functioning as a parking lot.

The project site is located at the eastern end of Epic Way, adjacent to Coyote Creek, southeast of River Oaks Parkway and Seely Avenue in north San José. The site is fenced off on three sides and only the western edge along Epic Way is currently open and unfenced.

Coyote Creek Trail runs north-south adjacent to the eastern edge of the park with an approximate 7-foot elevation change between the parkland and the trail which runs on a levee. To the north, is the Crescendo residential development which is separated from the site by a chainlink fence and a row of pine trees; parking and internal circulation separates residential units from the park. To the immediate south are agricultural lands that have recently burned, and a technology company is located to the southwest. Both of these properties are fenced or walled off from the park and adjacent street. Epic Way terminates in a cul-de-sac along the western edge of the park.

The neighborhood consists of high density residential development adjacent to high tech offices with some neighborhood serving commercial development near River Oaks Park. Epic Apartments is located immediately across Epic Way from the park with five stories of studios to two bedroom apartment homes that look directly onto the park. While the Epic Apartment complex provides a wide-range of outdoor amenities for their residents including a swimming pool, small dog park, play area, and plazas, the closest neighborhood park serving the greater area is River Oaks Park which is roughly one mile away.

Historic aerials from 1939, 1956, and 1965 indicate the site was an orchard and a 1982 aerial depicts the site as undeveloped with no orchard; the buildings associated with the Cadence Design Systems campus appear in 1993 aerial images.<sup>1</sup> For the past few years, the site has served as parking and staging for the construction of the adjacent multi-family residential development.

### B. PREVIOUS PLANS

Previous conceptual design plans were created in 2006 and 2008. The previous conceptual plans proposed connections to Coyote Creek Trail, internal park circulation, open play fields, and tot play areas.

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<sup>1</sup> Phase I Environmental Site Assessment Update Cadence Office Park 535-575 River Oaks Parkway, San José, California prepared for Essex Property Trust, Inc., and Essex Portfolio L.P. by Versar Inc.

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The City of San José has designated the site as a neighborhood park. Neighborhood parks provide recreation needs for residents living near the park and are open from sunrise to one hour after sunset. Typical neighborhood park elements may include: basketball, tennis, or volleyball courts; exercise courses; picnic areas; and playgrounds. Restrooms and parking are typically not provided in neighborhood parks unless there are amenities for a broader community; the size and configuration of Iris Chang Park precludes the inclusion of community serving elements such as soft/baseball fields or soccer fields. With the City's acquisition of the project site, there has been public interest to create a park that is unique from parks traditionally found in neighboring communities. The City's direction is to use parks as a place-making tool to differentiate and celebrate each neighborhood's character.

The project site is located in north San José and is subject to the *North San José Area Development Policy Parks and Recreation Facilities – Kit of Parts* dated April 5, 2010. This Kit of Parts establishes guidelines for site amenities, hardscape, lighting, site architecture, walls and fencing, and wayfinding product selection.

The development policy goal is “to create a distinguishing character for public spaces and to promote cohesive growth in the incorporated area.” Coyote Creek and Guadalupe River define the area and serve as inspiration for the materials. The policy prefers an earth tone palette with nature-derived texture and impressions incorporated as appropriate. Natural stone and environmental motifs, especially riparian inspired, are encouraged along with drought tolerant and native vegetation that can tolerate recycled water's higher salt content. The Kit of Parts provides a range of approved amenities; deviation from listed products needs to be submitted to City staff for approval.

### C. SITE CONSIDERATIONS

The Addendum to the Final Program Environmental Impact Report for the North San José Development Policies Update (SCH# 2004102067) for 545-575 River Oaks Parkway File No. PDC-06-067 (Addendum to the FPEIR), which serves as the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) conformity document that the Iris Chang Park Master Plan's CEQA document will supplement, stated invasive species will not be used and that native species will be used to increase habitat values. Park landscaping is required to be in accordance with the City's Riparian Corridor Policy Guideline 3A. While Iris Chang Park is not located within 100 feet of a riparian corridor and normally would not be required to meet the Riparian Corridor Policy Guideline 3A, the Addendum to the FPEIR states that the park will be landscaped in accordance with this policy as a condition of approval.

The Riparian Corridor Policy Guideline 3A clarifies that landscape areas adjacent to riparian corridors generally use plant species native to central California and appropriate to riparian habitats. A list of suitable plant species per channel location is included in Appendix B of the Riparian Corridor Policy. Several of the existing trees on site are not included in the list of suitable species but will remain.

Many established trees were protected and remain for inclusion in the park. A row of 13 *Lagerstroemia indica* sp. (crape myrtle) run roughly north-south through the middle of the park and the south edge of the site is lined by a row of nine *Eucalyptus sideroxylon* (red ironbark). The northern edge of the park just south of the chainlink fence with Crescendo residential development is comprised of a dense row of *Pinus* sp. (pines). There are several other trees that remain on site but many appear stressed or are dead, whether by construction- or

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drought-related impacts. A few existing trees may be removed during the construction process triggering the City's standard tree replacement requirement.

The site has no shrubs or groundcover with the exception of clumps of vegetation along the chainlink fence at base of levee.

Site soil is significantly compacted given previous building footprints and parking lots, plus more recent staging and parking related to the adjacent multi-family housing development's construction. There is little observable organic material. Per a 2006 geotechnical investigation,<sup>2</sup> the site's soil profile appears to be relatively uniform, consisting of approximately 6 to 12 feet of stiff to hard interbedded sand, clay and silt over stiff clays to depths of about 25 to 38 feet. Below the stiff clay, are dense sands. Information from the California Geologic Survey indicates that the ground water levels in the vicinity are at depths as shallow as about 7 feet which is the recommended groundwater level to be considered in design of the park. Soil samples tested in February 2016 indicate strongly alkaline soil with a pH of 8.4 in sample 3 and 8.9 in sample 2. Soils with a pH above 7.5 are considered to be above the range preferred by most plants, and soils with a pH above 7.9 could cause most plants to show some yellowing of foliage and poor vigor<sup>3</sup>. Soil amendments and fertilizer are recommended to enhance plant growth.

The site is relatively flat with minimal grade change from one end of the park to the other however the Coyote Creek Trail is 7 feet above the adjacent park site. Coyote Creek flows north and is located east of the site, separated by a flood control bypass channel, a maintenance road, and a levee. The Coyote Creek Trail runs along the top of the levee. Earlier biological studies recommended keeping a 30-foot minimum setback from the top of bank of the levee to provide additional setback from the existing riparian corridor along the creek.<sup>4</sup> A trail connection to Coyote Creek Trail has been in all preliminary plans; connecting to the levee will require coordination with both the US Army Corps of Engineers and Santa Clara Valley Water District in addition to following their levee fill requirements.

### D. MASTER PLAN

Iris Chang Park is named after Iris Chang, a world-renown author who gave voice to the voiceless, writing about atrocities so that they would not be forgotten and never repeated. Ms. Chang lived in San Jose before her death and her parents live in walking distance of the park. While not a memorial, the park design is to draw on Iris' legacy while providing the community with a unique public amenity.

Three community meetings were held over several months to better understand residents' wants and desires for the park both in terms of the types of activities and amenities they wanted as well as the qualities of space and experience that residents valued and wanted to have provided in Iris Chang Park. The strongest consensus was wanting trees, specialty plantings, lighting, shaded seating, and public art; there was no consensus regarding any

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<sup>2</sup> Geotechnical Investigation Residential Development at Cadence Campus San Jose, California Report No. 881-9 prepared for Essex Property Trust, Inc. Palo Alto, November 22, 2006 by TRC Lowney.

<sup>3</sup> Iris Chang Park 16-057-0104 20160307 report\_far\_2950401-001, prepared for PlaceWorks, March 7, 2016 by Waypoint Analytical.

<sup>4</sup> Cadence Riparian Habitat Assessment and Setback Recommendation (PN 2923-01) letter dated 19 March 2008 prepared for David J. Powers & Associates by H.T. Harvey & Associates.

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active recreation such as tennis, basketball, or skating. When asked to articulate qualities residents wanted Iris Chang Park to have, the resoundingly clear desire expressed by local residents was for creating a peaceful oasis, an out of the box experience, a destination, a beautiful, breathtaking, and visually engaging space.

Based on community feedback and discussion, and collaborating with Richard Deutsch, the public artist commissioned for the project, Iris Chang Park is based on the idea that one person or action can make a difference, the “Power of One” that Iris Chang wrote about. Expressed in patterns of virtual water and air, the integrated landscape and art design emanates from a large impact stone and its rippling landscape, a 100-foot diameter landform. The proposed paths, planting areas, site elements, informal play and seating areas are based on natural elements such as streams, eddies, water currents, and ripples. The Master Plan includes a series of six sculptures:

- The History Stone Sculpture Area
- The Theater Area
- Story Grove
- The Ripple Area
- Maze Play Area
- Stele Sculpture Area

Visitors may enter the site from three locations. The main and secondary entries are located on Epic Way, and the third entry is from Coyote Creek Trail. The main path provides an undulating sweep of revealed views as one moves through the park, culminating in a graceful curve that rises up the seven-feet in elevation change to Coyote Creek Trail. A variety of nodes off the main path provide access to small oases located in the park for quieter contemplation. The landscape is “painted” in large swaths of plantings and grasses that ripple in the breeze adding a sense of motion to the park.

Public art is a key element of Iris Chang Park and is integrated through the park with the landscape design throughout the project to connect and educate visitors about Iris Chang. Large stone monoliths or “stele” are used to represent Iris and are placed throughout the site to activate and define spaces within the project site. The entry is conceived with two vertical stone stele to orient visitors arriving at the park. “Iris Chang Park” is engraved on one stele, and a paragraph describing Iris Chang is engraved on the second stele.

As a visitor navigates the site, they enter the History Stone Sculpture area. A large stone sculpture represents Iris Chang’s statement, “We must understand the past if we are to navigate the future...” The stone piece is an historical item once used in a Chinese mill.

Continuing through the site, a visitor enters the Theater Area. This area of the master plan is used for gathering, sitting, and or creative play. Two large sculptures made from a Chinese stone called gabro are placed within the Theater area. Together the two stone pieces are called “Touch,” and represent humans’ reliance on each other.

Located in the northern central portion of the site, the Story Grove provides a shaded gathering space for visitors. The area may be used as a gathering space for passive recreation.

A large (100-foot diameter) undulated earthwork form is proposed in the center of the park. The form resembles a ripple in water, and is punctuated with a large stone sculpture in the center of the massive ripple.

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The form symbolizes Iris Chang's statement, "Your path to freedom lies in your belief in the power of one person to make a difference..."

The Stele Sculpture Area is located in the northwest corner of the park. The area is framed by an "ocean" of grasses acting as a rain garden. A stone monolith provides a focal point in the corner, and is engraved with the words "Power of One." Arced corten steel panels are envisioned behind the plant material and the stone monolith as an accent in the area. The Maze Play Area is located between the Ripple and the Stele Sculpture Area. The maze is a spiral sculpture that provides opportunities for creative and non-traditional play. The entire park is seen as playful art that also provides an oasis from the hectic Silicon Valley.

Water-conserving and recycled water tolerant plants form the backbone which will be supplemented with a planted swale that undulates near the northern levee corner of the site to address stormwater drainage on-site. Lawn areas will be minimized and the Ripple will likely be no-mow fescue to accommodate immediate access and play by local residents. Large swaths of ornamental grasses and other shrubs will be supplemented by additional tree plantings to provide much needed shade from summer sun. Existing crape myrtles may be relocated and/or removed for use in other projects. Final plant selection will be based on review of soil requirements, State's Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance, Kit of Parts, California Invasive Plant Council, and other requirements.

Other than the sculptures, there are no structures in the park. Trash receptacles, bike racks, a drinking fountain with pet bowl, and benches are the main supplemental elements envisioned for Iris Chang Park. An illustrative graphic of the master plan along with computer simulations of the integrated landscape design and sculptures are included on the following pages.

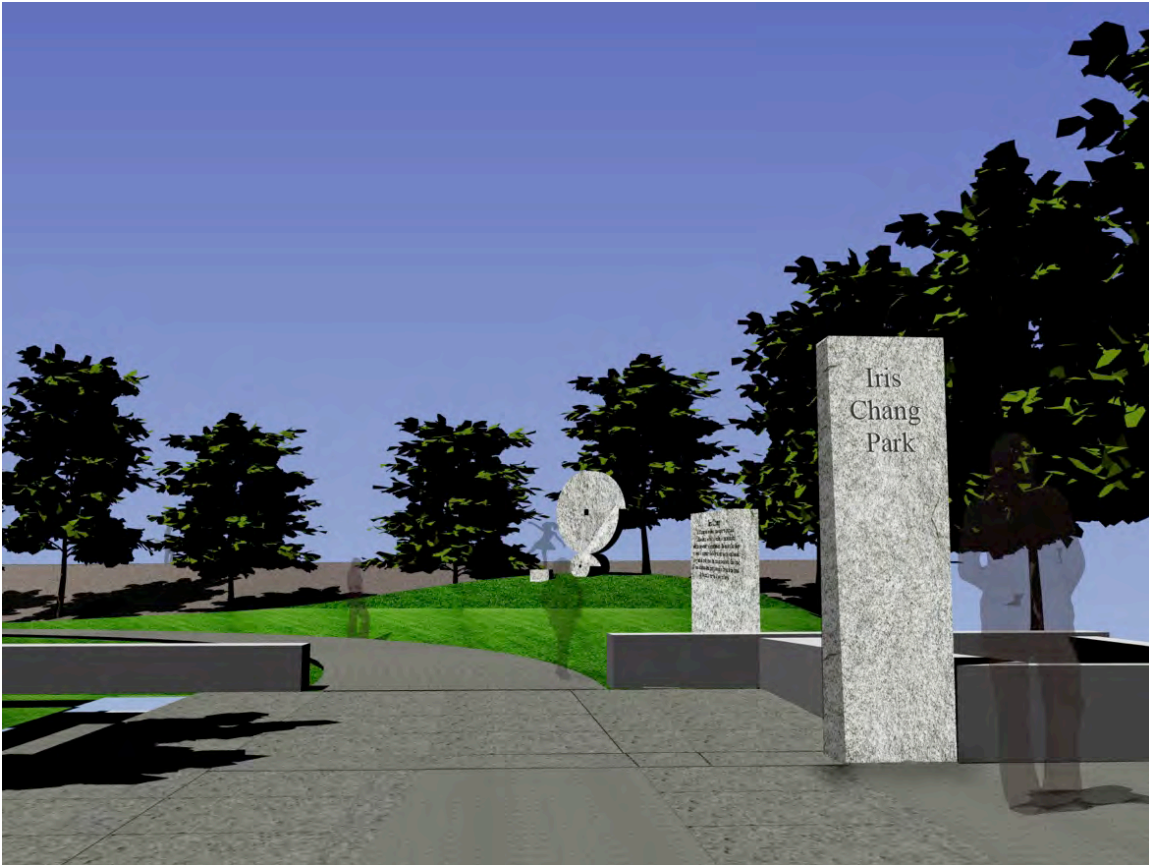
The final community meeting allowed the public to see this integration of art and landscape expression that grew from their comments and the collaboration of the design team. As described above, the Master Plan "tells" a sensitive yet powerful story, conveyed in the design of the landscape and conceptual art pieces, and stands on its own but is made richer for the essence of Iris that is subtly infused throughout the site. Deceptively simple, Iris Chang Park allows for graceful movement through an artful oasis, providing a sense of artful play that is visually and contextually rich. Iris' mother, who was involved throughout the process, said that the Master Plan captured Iris' spirit in the design and commented on the appropriateness of the ripple and the "Power of One" as representation of Iris. Other residents stated that they were "wowed" by the strength and simplicity of the design, that the design gave them more than they had even considered possible or expected. Iris Chang Park sensitively responds to the community's desires for a truly unique, breathtaking, beautiful oasis that is inspiring.

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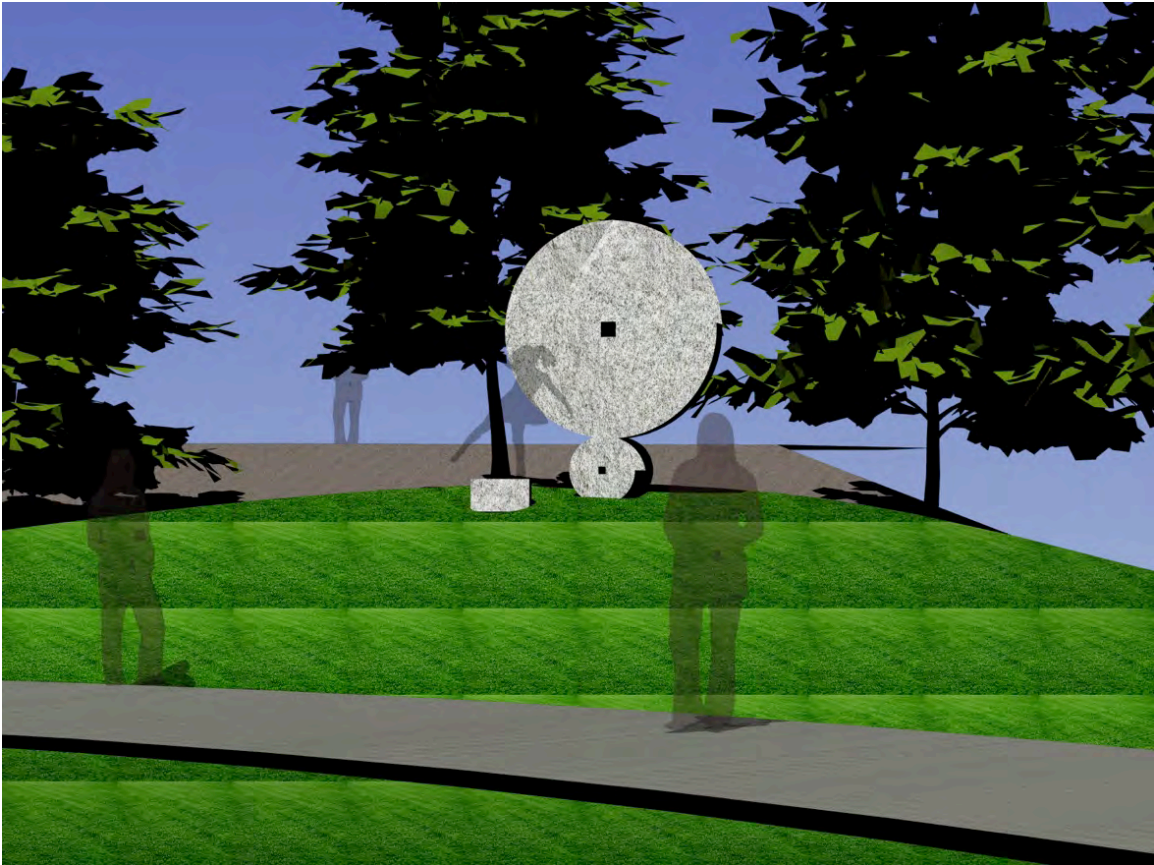
Illustrative Master Plan

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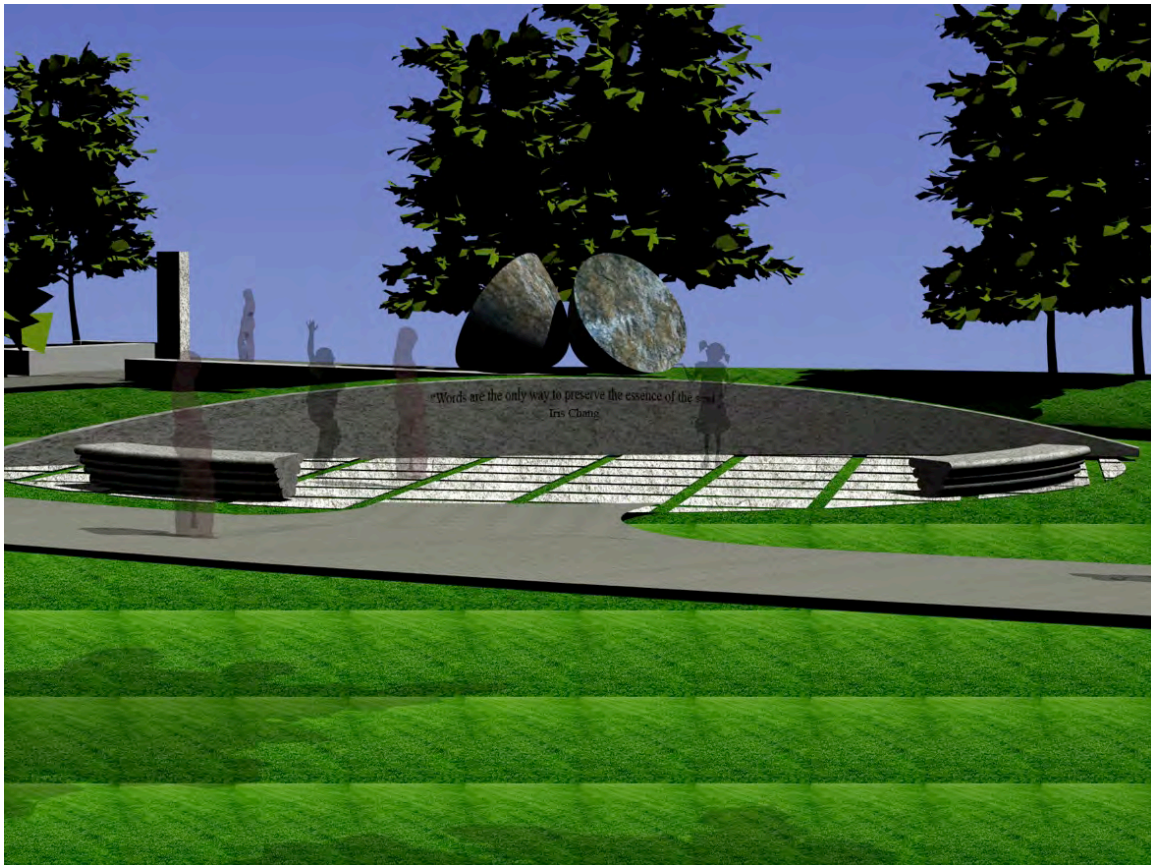
Entry Area

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History Stone

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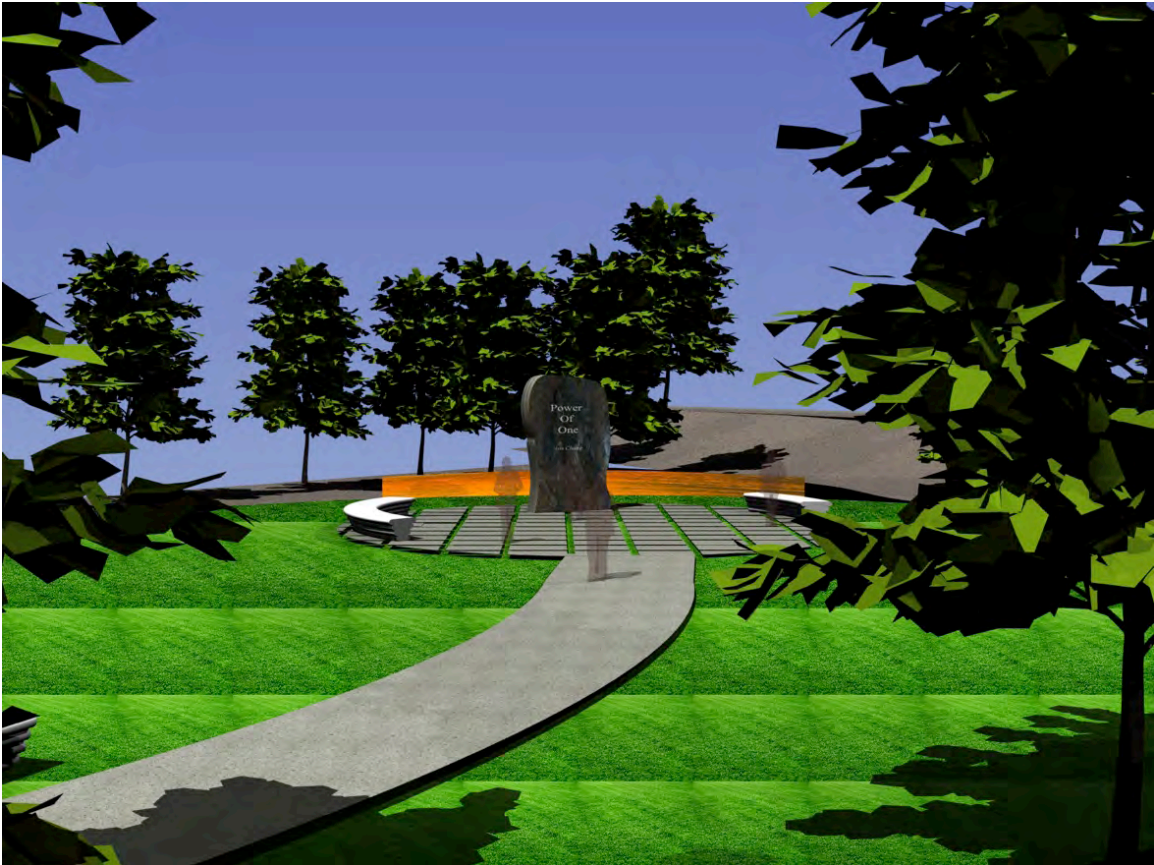


Theater Area

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Ripple and Maze Play Area



Stele Sculpture Area